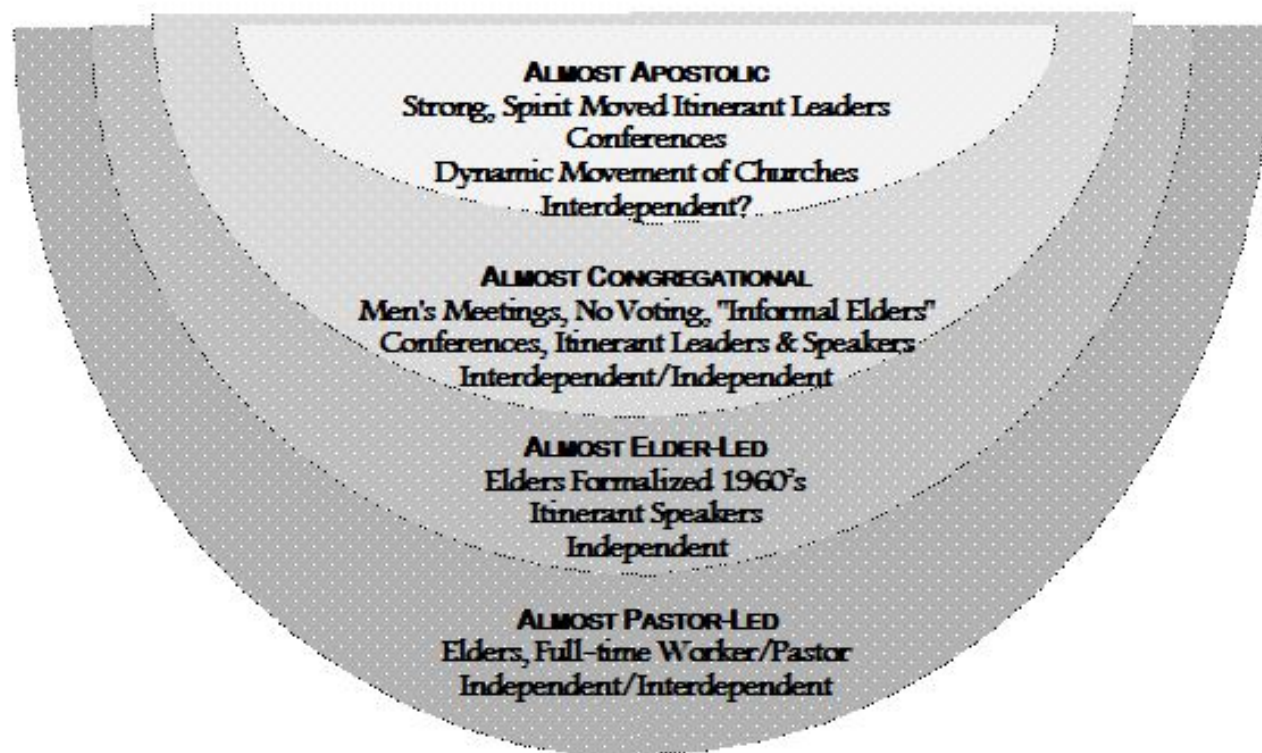


WHY LEADERSHIP ROLES AND THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ARE OFTEN CONFUSING IN BRETHREN CHURCHES.

1. Because of a disproportionate emphasis on the Biblical metaphor of the church as a body, an organism not an organization. Although it is a body, it is also a flock, a household, a building and a race of priests. The church requires structures and organization as well as spontaneity and the dynamic movement of the Spirit.
2. Because there is no adequate forum for concluding matters over which there is disagreement or ambiguity. Such a forum would involve organization, something not accepted by the "organism mentality".
3. Because of a distorted view of the Biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers. All believers are priests but not all are equally gifted or have equal roles in the church. Those gifted to lead, teach, and shepherd should be free to do so without having to struggle against the historical paranoia regarding pastors and "one man ministry".
4. Because Brethren don't like to write it down if its not in the Bible. Practices are passed on orally and inconsistently resulting in confusion, especially for new comers.
5. Because a wide variety of forms of church government have been practiced throughout our history. Each of these various approaches continue to be practiced with no uniform conclusions in sight. It must also be recognized that Scripture gives some support to each of these views.

FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT FROM 1825 TO THE PRESENT



Since none of these systems have been organized, adequately written down or agreed upon... confusion prevails. Many have been in two or three Brethren groups, each claiming different variations on the correct New Testament pattern of government. Each congregation ought to establish in writing its decision-making processes and leadership roles.